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3rd Legislative District

January 30, 2011



Pictured above: Participants of Greater Spokane Incorporated's annual Olympia fly-in gather in the state reception room to listen to Senator Brown's address and engage in discussion.

Spokane Delegation Visits the Capitol

This week over 85 individuals from Spokane and the region came to Olympia for Greater Spokane Incorporated's annual Olympia trip. I addressed the large contingent of business and civic leaders and had an opportunity to discuss important items on their agenda. The number one priority, as always with this group, was the economic growth of our region. My staff and I took many other meetings with individuals and groups on this trip, and others who came to Olympia separately from Spokane to advocate for issues important to them. Highlighted local meetings included: Partners with Families and Children, Spokane County Parks, Daybreak, Northeast Community Center, Mobius, Spokane County Parks, Health Sciences Service Authority, City of Spokane, Representatives from several Spokane Credit Unions, Spokane Transit Authority, and Spokane Troopers for the Washington State Patrol.

Pictured below: From right to left Jeff Thoet, Ron Snowden and Major Bambino from the Spokane Washington State Patrol Auto Theft Detectives



Security Briefing Addresses Public Safety

On Friday I joined Governor Gregoire, Mayor Verner, and Representative Ormsby for a briefing from law enforcement at City Hall on the MLK public safety incident. In a written statement the Governor said the actions of the three city workers who spotted the backpack “were swift and helped prevent a tragedy.” Further, that “from law enforcement to the firefighters to the bomb squad, everyone deserved high marks for acting with the utmost professionalism.”

Reducing Incarceration the Smart Way

For 15 years, the Legislature has invested in a host of crime prevention and treatment programs to prevent adult and juvenile offenders from reentering the system. A new study shows those investments are paying off — big time. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, the state today saves \$635 million *in each two-year budget*, thanks to reforms in treatment and prevention programs and sentencing. Those investments have also led to a reduction in violent and serious crime.

Over the last decade, overall crime has dropped by 22 percent; violent crime is down 11 percent; property crime is down 23 percent; and juvenile felonies have dropped by nearly 50 percent. Today there are approximately 600 juveniles in the system, compared to 1,600 a decade ago. Research shows that, for juvenile offenders, functional family therapy can reduce the crime rate by 18 percent, saving the state \$27,000 per offender in corrections and victim costs. Aggression replacement training can reduce crime by another 9 percent, saving taxpayers \$11,200 per offender. Education prison programs have been shown to reduce the crime rate another 8 percent, saving taxpayers \$7,200 per offender.

Tax amnesty period starts Feb. 1

Many businesses that are behind in taxes can pay their back taxes during a special amnesty period without having to pay penalties or interest between as a result of action taken during the special legislative session last December. Businesses that are criminal defendants, face tax fraud charges or are in bankruptcy are not eligible for the amnesty program, which runs from Feb. 1 through April 30. The last day for applications is April 18. You can [learn more about the program and request a quote for your unpaid taxes at paymytax.org](http://paymytax.org).

The idea behind the amnesty is to help businesses that are struggling due to circumstances beyond their control, particularly during these difficult economic times, so that they can remain taxpayers and employers today and in the future. The state Department of Revenue projects that the program will help approximately 10,000 businesses and generate \$24.4 million in unpaid state taxes and \$3.9 million in unpaid local taxes.

Which came first – the revenues or the priorities?

If certain investments are critical to our quality of life and our economic future, then not making those investments is the definition of short-sighted. To not make these investments will cost individuals, families, businesses and our economy as a whole far more than the dollar amount of the investments themselves. In other words, our situation isn't one of investments we can't afford. Our situation is one of investments we can't afford to forego.

But there's also a moral dimension to our situation that we can't be overlooked. If we identify things like education, higher education, health care, public safety, environmental protection and transportation as our common key priorities, what does it say about us and our commitment to our shared health, safety and prosperity to then turn around and say we just can't afford them?

Why bother having priorities at all for individuals, families, businesses and communities throughout our state if we're only going to undermine those priorities when the going gets tough?

As the mantra about the need to "align spending with revenues" grows louder and louder, as we hear more and more about how our budget options are limited and how we have no choice but to eliminate the public services that support and promote our key priorities, I can't help but think we're missing the larger picture.

I think we do have choices. To read my full blog post on this topic click [here](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.

If at any time you decide you no longer wish to receive updates from me, please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/subscriptions/member.aspx?chamber=s&member=brown> to remove your name from the list.

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